



# FOOD SECURITY AMONG SYRIAN HOUSEHOLDS WITHIN SYRIA AND NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES

SYRIA CRISIS - REGIONAL THEMATIC REPORT

AUGUST 2014

**REACH** Informing  
more effective  
humanitarian action

## SUMMARY

The conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic which began in March 2011 has now entered its fourth year. Security risks and deteriorating socio-economic conditions have forced millions to leave their homes; resulting in an estimated 6.5 million internally displaced people (IDPs) within Syria<sup>1</sup> and at least 2.7 million seeking refuge in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey.<sup>2</sup> Many **Syrian IDPs and refugees are confronted with severe challenges to secure access to food**. In January 2014, a reported 590,000 individuals in Syria were in acute need and 4.9 million in moderate need of food assistance in Syria. The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) warns that food insecurity in 2014 amongst Syrian households will continue to worsen. In this context, a **regional, comparative analysis of the main factors behind a lack of access to food** is of key importance to aid actors working to address the needs of populations affected by the Syrian crisis throughout the region.

This report presents an **analysis of primary data collected by REACH** through assessments carried out in partnership with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Food Programme (WFP). It focuses on different aspects of food security among camp-based and host community-based Syrian refugees in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI)<sup>3</sup> and Jordan<sup>4</sup> collected by REACH. This analysis also includes **available secondary data** from Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Turkey. Key findings from this regional thematic study are organised in three broad categories: 1) Access to Food; 2) Food Consumption; and 3) Coping strategies, and include:

### Access to food

**Across the region access to food emerged as a greater impediment to food security than food availability** and this appears to be mainly related to: a) prices of food items in local markets, b) geographical scope of relief aid, and c) affordability/purchase power of households.

- Markets are generally functioning throughout the region but household purchasing power is affected by inflation, specifically among the price of bread and where governments have removed subsidies. Whereas in Lebanon little variation exists in the price of commodities between areas, in Syria these can vary between border areas, that sometimes experience renewed cross-border trade, and remote areas within the country, where access to food can be scarcer.
- The rising value of fuel can also affect access to food. It creates a higher cost for harvesting or transporting food which is reflected in food prices. The inability of households to buy fuel means they are unable to cook the dry food that is provided in many in-kind food baskets. This was reported in the KRI, Lebanon and Syria.
- In the KRI host communities, cash is the most commonly reported source to access food. Whereas in the KRI camps and in Jordan this is more evenly divided between cash and WFP assistance. This suggests a high reliance on food assistance and access to food through local markets in host communities.
- Access to food through humanitarian assistance is often determined by geographical or contextual limitations. For example, in Syria the delivery of in-kind food is either prevented or regular disrupted in besieged areas or where there are high security risks. In Iraq and Turkey, government restrictions have limited the supply of food aid to host community-based refugees. The impact of this is not adequately understood due to a lack of humanitarian presence in these areas.

<sup>1</sup> OCHA, Syria Crisis Portal. Available at: <http://syria.unocha.org/>, last accessed 9 April 2014.

<sup>2</sup> The exact figure at the time of writing was 2,839,225. UNHCR Syria Regional Refugee Response portal. Available at: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>, last accessed 2 June 2014.

<sup>3</sup> The KRI camps in question are Akre, Arbat Transit, Basirma, Darashakran, Gawilan, Kawergosk and Qushtapa and the governorates of Duhok, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah.

<sup>4</sup> This included Al Za'atari refugee camp and the governorates of Ajloun, Al Mafraq, Amman, Aqaba, Balqa, Irbid, Jarash, Karak, Ma'an, Madaba, Tafleeh and Zarqa

- The main type of food assistance continues to be food vouchers in Egypt, Jordan and the KRI, but electronic cards have been introduced across the region and are especially prevalent in Lebanon and among camp-based refugees in Turkey. While these can provide greater flexibility to Syrian refugees on the types of food they consume compared to in-kind food assistance, their value is also determined by inflation. The challenges and possibilities of introducing e-cards in the KRI and host community based refugees in Turkey should be further explored.
- In some cases, in-kind food assistance has been perceived by refugee households as either economically or culturally inappropriate. Dry food items distributed require fuel to cook, which may be expensive to purchase or not available, while many parcels contain rice instead of bulgur, which is the staple food in Syria.
- Reliance on salaries to access food is common among non-camp households in Egypt, the KRI, Jordan and Lebanon, whereas camp-based refugees in Al Za'atari and the KRI are more likely to use savings.
- Almost a quarter of refugees living in Jordanian host communities and the KRI camps reported having no economic resources at all, compared to less than 1% in Al Za'atari and KRI host communities. A better understanding of the context-specific factors affecting access to economic resources must be gained to develop effective livelihood support programmes.
- More female-headed than male-headed Syrian households in Jordanian host communities and KRI camps said they had no economic resource, which was also the case among those reporting no secondary source of income in the KRI host communities.
- In Lebanon, the longer refugee households had been in the country the less food insecurity they experienced compared to later arrivals, which may be attributable to better access to food assistance. Food consumption was better amongst early arrivals in Jordan but the opposite was found to be the case in the KRI. These conflicting trends should be further researched.

## Consumption

Across the neighbouring countries hosting Syrian refugee populations, the proportion of households with a poor food consumption score (FCS) was greatest in the seven KRI camps. Food consumption is one of the most significant determinants of food insecurity. Further research should be conducted to better comprehend how it is directly affected by households' economic resources/purchasing power, as well as refugee households' needs and time of arrival in the host country.

- Across the region, meat and fruit are the two food groups most commonly reported by Syrian households as not consumed on a regular basis or at all. This could be explained by the lack of fruit provided through in-kind food and the propensity for meat to be among the more expensive food items. Both have a high nutritional value and the impact of this on the health and nutrition of refugees, particularly infants, elderly persons and pregnant or lactating women, should be considered.
- The proportion of assessed households with an acceptable FCS was higher in Lebanon, across Jordan, the KRI host communities and in camps in Turkey than in the KRI camps. Syrian household level information on food consumption scores was not available for Egypt and Syria. While humanitarian assistance to non-camp refugees in the KRI has been limited a large proportion had an acceptable FCS which suggests that levels of consumption are being maintained by accessing local food markets either through cash or coping strategies.
- A majority of households with a poor FCS in Al Za'atari and the KRI camps reported food as their primary concern. However, in host communities in Jordan and the KRI where the greatest need was rent this was also cited by a majority of households with a poor FCS. This highlights the importance of understanding needs from a refugee household's point of view and how they measure different needs against each other.

- In both Jordan and Lebanon, refugee households were more likely to have an acceptable FCS the longer they had been in the country, whereas the opposite trend was noted in the KRI camps. This should be actively investigated to identify the challenges that refugee households in the KRI camps are facing to accessing food. A greater commitment to understanding the means of food consumption of unregistered refugee households generally is also important, particularly as they are the least likely to have access to food assistance.

## Coping strategies

The most commonly reported long-term coping strategies used to basic food needs are the use of savings or taking credit/borrowing money; both of which have severe financial implications that increase the risk of food insecurity in the future.

- The most common consumption-related coping strategies across the region were relying on less preferred/less expensive food or reducing the number of meals a day. On average, households across the region were eating fewer than three meals a day.
- Broadly speaking coping strategies were more commonly used among camp-based than non camp-based households. Furthermore, whereas more households in the KRI host communities had exhausted their savings, the opposite was found in Jordan. These findings imply a more critical situation regarding the use of coping strategies for refugee households in the KRI host communities and camp-based households in Jordan. A better understanding of the push and pull factors affecting the adoption of short-term and long-term coping strategies among Syrian households will enable targeted assistance to adequately respond to, but also begin to mitigate, risks of food insecurity.
- The use of coping strategies by a majority of the refugee population in Lebanon was suspected to be driving relatively high levels of food consumption, while conversely in Jordan and the KRI, a smaller proportion of households with an acceptable FCS were found to use coping strategies than the proportion with a poor FCS. The relationship between coping strategies and food consumption should be further explored.
- REACH found that in Jordan, as the proportion of individuals aged 16 to 60 in households increased, the use of certain coping strategies decreased, especially short-term, consumption-related ones. The relationship between coping strategies and the proportion of household dependents should be further explored.
- REACH data in the KRI camps and across Jordan found a statistically significant relationship between the use of coping strategies and FCS, whereby the greater a household's FCS the less likely they were to adopt negative coping strategies on a regular basis. This certainly merits greater attention, particularly as it suggests that the ability to access regular and sufficient food has a direct impact on the likelihood to adopt negative and unsustainable coping strategies that only further compound the risk of experiencing food insecurity.

### About REACH

REACH is a joint initiative of two international non-governmental organizations - ACTED and IMPACT Initiatives - and the UN Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNOSAT). REACH's mission is to strengthen evidence-based decision making by aid actors through efficient data collection, management and analysis before, during and after an emergency. By doing so, REACH contributes to ensuring that communities affected by emergencies receive the support they need. All REACH activities are conducted within the framework and in support of inter-agency aid coordination mechanisms. For more information about REACH activities in Jordan you can write to our in-country team at: [jordan@reach-initiative.org](mailto:jordan@reach-initiative.org), and to our global office: [geneva@reach-initiative.org](mailto:geneva@reach-initiative.org). You can also visit: [www.reach-initiative.org](http://www.reach-initiative.org), and follow us @REACH\_info.

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## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CSI	Coping Strategy Index
FCS	Food Consumption Score
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
KRI	Kurdistan Region of Iraq
MSNA	Multi-sector Needs Assessment
RRP	Regional Response Plan
SINA	Syria Integrated Needs Assessment
TRC	Turkish Red Crescent
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VASyR	Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon
WFP	World Food Programme

## GEOGRAPHICAL CLASSIFICATIONS

Governorate	Across the region, this is the highest administrative boundary below the national level.
District	Across the region, governorates are divided into districts.
Sub-district	In Iraq, Jordan and Syria districts are divided into sub-districts.

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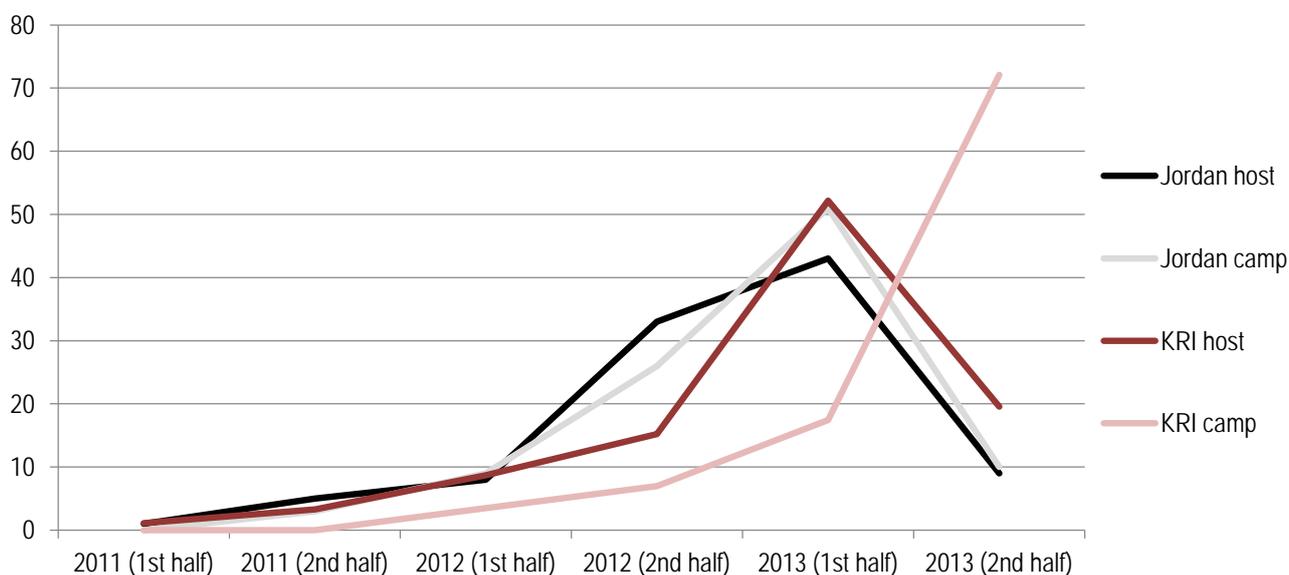
## INTRODUCTION

The conflict in Syria which began in March 2011 has now entered its fourth year. Security risks and deteriorating socio-economic conditions have forced millions to leave their homes; resulting in an estimated 6.5 million people displaced within Syria<sup>5</sup> and at least 2.7 million seeking refuge in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey.<sup>6</sup>

As the table below illustrates, Jordan and the KRI experienced a rapid surge of refugees in the first half of 2013, when the intensity of the violence in Syria renewed, and a decline in the second half of the year. A different trend was noted among the refugee population living in camps in the KRI, who were more likely to have arrived at a later date and whose numbers increased consistently until the end of 2013. Corresponding available data for Lebanon is currently not available, given that the Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (VASyR) was undertaken in May 2013; hence the proportions in terms of time of arrival are incomparable.<sup>7</sup>

According to the Syria Needs Analysis Project (SNAP), in early February 2014 Jordan experienced a 50% increase in refugee arrivals due to fighting in the bordering governorate of Dar'a.<sup>8</sup> Registration data available on the UNHCR Syria Regional Refugee portal shows that the number of Syrian refugees registering in Egypt, Lebanon and Turkey has consistently increased over the years though figures have stagnated in Egypt since October 2013<sup>9</sup> which could be an effect of the political and economic climate. SNAP reports that **over 20,000 refugees have arrived in Turkey since the beginning of 2014 to escape fighting in Aleppo City and surrounding areas.**<sup>10</sup> In Iraq, the number of registered refugees began to plateau in May 2013 with a sudden increase roughly from September to November 2013, following chemical attacks in the governorate of Rural Damascus in August. This corroborates REACH findings from the KRI camps and the number of refugees has stabilised since the start of 2014.

Figure 1: Trend in arrival period of Syrian refugees in Jordan and the KRI (REACH data)



<sup>5</sup> OCHA, Syria Crisis Portal. Available at: <http://syria.unocha.org>, last accessed 9 April 2014.

<sup>6</sup> At the time of writing, this figure stood at roughly 2,839,000. UNHCR Syria Regional Refugee Response portal. Available at: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>, last accessed 2 June 2014.

<sup>7</sup> WFP/UNHCR/UNICEF, Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (December 2013).

<sup>8</sup> SNAP, Regional Analysis Syria - Part II: Host Countries – 04 April 2014 (April 2014).

<sup>9</sup> UNHCR Syria Regional Refugee Response. Available at: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>, last accessed 2 June 2014.

<sup>10</sup> SNAP, Regional Analysis Syria - Part II: Host Countries – 04 April 2014 (April 2014).

In January 2014, around 590,000 individuals in Syria were in acute need and an estimated 4.9 million in moderate need of food assistance in Syria.<sup>11</sup> FAO predicts that food insecurity in 2014 amongst Syrian refugee households will continue to increase, particularly if **limited economic resources and reliance on the delivery of food assistance** continue to affect the ability of households to meet their food needs.<sup>12</sup>

With the adoption of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2139 on 22 February 2014, many previously inaccessible areas in Syria have been reached but protracted violence is predicted to continue posing obstacles to the relief effort.<sup>13</sup> WFP has warned that the already severe food crisis will be further aggravated by the ongoing **drought**, impacting food production and livestock rearing which are primary income generating activities in Syria.<sup>14</sup>

In neighbouring countries, eroding economic resources is predicted to continue **reducing refugee household purchasing power** to a level where many will struggle to meet basic food needs. This is further compounded by the inflation generated by the Syrian Crisis. The price of food in local markets in Syria<sup>15</sup> and neighbouring countries will continue to rise and affect access to food. This has particularly severe consequences for Syrian households living outside camps or hard-to-reach areas in Syria where a lack of or limited access to food assistance makes them almost completely reliant on local food markets.

In Egypt, the political and socio-economic climate combined with developing tensions between the local community and Syrian refugees are predicted to continue to reduce employment opportunities available to refugee households which have thus far been the most common economic resource.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, many may face a greater risk of food insecurity and having to adopt unsustainable coping strategies. Throughout the region, the use of savings, borrowing money and taking out credit to cope with a lack of food have eroded livelihood sources and lead to an accumulation of that pose a serious threat to household food security.

**This study seeks to provide a regional overview and comparison of the current food security situation experienced by Syrians affected by the crisis in different countries and contexts.** Using a combination of primary data collected by REACH and the most recent secondary sources to draw out key trends and distinctions as well as highlighting information gaps. The aim is to work towards identifying the most vulnerable groups across the region, to inform targeted food assistance and guide the course of future assessments to fill information needs.

Please see the annexed map *Food Security Amongst Syrians: Primary and Secondary Data* to see the geographical coverage of REACH and secondary data used in this report.

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<sup>11</sup> Assessment Working Group. Complementary Operational Analysis Report (January 2014).

<sup>12</sup> FAO, 'Syria needs to produce food: agriculture cannot be an afterthought'. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/emergencies/crisis/syria/en/>, last accessed 9 April 2014.

<sup>13</sup> WFP, Syria Crisis Response. 4 – 18 March 2014 (March 2014).

<sup>14</sup> WFP, 'WFP Dispatches Food for Record Number of Syrians as Fears Rise About Impact of Drought', 08 April 2014. Available at: <http://www.wfp.org/news/news-release/wfp-dispatches-food-record-number-syrians-fears-rise-about-impact-drought>, last accessed 9 April 2014.

<sup>15</sup> ACAPS, Regional Analysis Syria 07 February 2014 (February 2014).

<sup>16</sup> WFP, Global Food Security Update: Tracking food security trends in vulnerable countries. Issue 13 February 2014 (February 2014).

## METHODOLOGY

### DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The report draws heavily on primary data collected by REACH between October 2013 and April 2014 through household interviews with Syrian refugees in:

- **Jordan:** Al Za'atari refugee camp and the 12 governorates<sup>17</sup>; and
- **KRI:** seven refugee camps and three governorates.<sup>18</sup>

Some of these were part of multi-sector assessment or regular thematic surveys carried out by REACH and not specifically focused on food security from which relevant and comparable information was extracted. To provide a region-wide analysis of food security indicators, available secondary information from Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and Turkey has been used to complement this information. These sources include notably WFP Syria Crisis Response: Situation Update factsheets, UNHCR Regional Response Plan, Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS) Regional Analysis, as well as inter-agency assessments. The full list of secondary sources used for this regional comparative thematic analysis is included in *Annex 1*. To ensure comparability and relevance of information, secondary data produced in the most recent six months was prioritized, with older data included only where no recent data was available.

The table below lists the food security-related indicators identified by the Regional Response Plan 6 (RRP6), and which have been adopted regionally by REACH, for each context and which have been included in this report.

Table 1: RRP6 and REACH regional food security indicators – by context.

Food Security Indicator	Context	Included
Percentage covered amongst eligible	Host Community	Not comprehensively
Have you had enough food to meet daily household needs in the past 30 days?	Host Community	Not comprehensively
If no, what were your coping strategies?	Host Community	Yes
Key food commodity price monitoring	Host Community / Camps / Syria	Not comprehensively
# and % of camp resident HHs / communities receiving food assistance by type of assistance	Camps / Syria	Yes
Status of food security	Syria	Yes
% of use of formal, informal and temporary food markets	Syria	Not comprehensively
% of fully functioning/partly functioning/non-functioning bakeries and supply capacity	Syria	No
Percentage of refugees eligible for food distribution	Host Community	No

<sup>17</sup> This combines findings from the WFP/REACH, Comprehensive Food Security Monitoring Exercise (CFSME) – DRAFT (forthcoming) conducted between December 2013 and January 2014 in Al Za'atari and the governorates of Ajloun, Al Mafraq, Amman, Aqaba, Balqa, Irbid, Jarash, Karak, Ma'an, Madaba, Tafilah and Zarqa.

<sup>18</sup> A food security camp assessment took place during October and November 2013 in Akre, Arbat Transit, Basirma, Darashakran, Gawilan, Kawergosk and Qushtapa. Findings will be available in REACH, Food Security Assessment Report: Syrian Refugees in Northern Iraq – DRAFT (forthcoming). KRI host community information provided in this report is based on preliminary findings from the REACH/UNHCR. Multi-sector needs Assessment in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (forthcoming) which took place in the governorates of Duhok, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah.

## FOOD SECURITY: DEFINITION AND TOOLS

In this regional analysis, REACH used the definition from the 1996 World Food Summit of food security: “when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life”.<sup>19</sup> To assess levels of food security, three different factors are taken into consideration: food availability; food access; and food use, which form the basis for the analysis presented in this report.<sup>20</sup>

To provide a comprehensive analysis of food security in the region affected by the Syrian Crisis, REACH used two key tools developed and widely used by the humanitarian community in emergency settings:

1. The **Food Consumption Score (FCS)** to determine levels of food security based on consumption. The FCS is a “composite score based on dietary diversity, food frequency, and relative nutritional importance [...] of different food groups”.<sup>21</sup>
2. The **Coping Strategy Index (CSI)** assesses the level of food security by measuring the frequency and severity of behaviour adopted when households are unable to access enough food.<sup>22</sup> Similarly to the food consumption score, it is calculated by measuring frequency and severity of strategies used. A high CSI indicates frequent use of severe, negative coping strategies and signals a greater risk of experiencing food insecurity as a result.

The CSI facilitates the collection of information regarding the food security status of populations affected by emergencies. In such contexts, particularly in conflict settings where there is restricted humanitarian access, it is often difficult to carry out in-depth assessments of food consumption. The CSI is a quicker and easier way of knowing broadly how affected populations are coping with food shortages and overtime can be used to monitor the impact food aid has, or has not, had.

These tools were used to measure food consumption and severity of coping strategies in the KRI and Jordan, and compared this with data in neighbouring countries.

## LIMITATIONS OF ANALYSIS

The sample size used in REACH assessments are calculated through a standardised approach ensuring 95% level of confidence.<sup>23</sup> However, the sample size and methodology in the secondary sources referred to in this report vary greatly and also occur at different points in time, sometimes covering different geographical areas in the same country. This limits the accuracy of a comparison, especially where there has been a lack of recent and/or comprehensive assessments, such as in Egypt, Lebanon and Turkey.

Previously, information on camp and non-camp based refugee households in the KRI and across Iraq has been lacking but the recently completed multi-sector needs assessment (MSNA) conducted by REACH and ongoing UNHCR/WFP Joint Assessment Mission (JAM) will help to shed light on the needs of these households. REACH data from KRI camps and Jordan also dates back to between November 2013 and January 2014 which means it could be slightly outdated.

<sup>19</sup> WHO. Available at: <http://www.who.int/trade/glossary/story028/en/>, last accessed 29 April 2014.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> CARE / WFP, *The Coping Strategies Index: Field Methods Manual* (2003). Available at: [http://home.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/manual\\_guide\\_proced/wfp211058.pdf](http://home.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/manual_guide_proced/wfp211058.pdf), last accessed 29 April 2014.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> The households sample sizes used were the following: Al Za'atari (725), Jordanian host communities (7,089), KRI camps (1,934), and KRI host communities (1,231).

## FINDINGS

This section provides a summary of the characteristics among Syrian households in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Syria, followed by an analysis of factors affecting food security at household level, including: access to food, food consumption, and coping strategies.

### ASSESSED HOUSEHOLDS

This sub-section provides an overview of the main demographic characteristics of Syrian households collected by REACH and gathered from secondary data, including: the size of households; household composition in terms of age and sex; household heads and displacement patterns of households

#### Household size

*The average size of households across the region affected by the Syrian Crisis is 5.4; however there are variations at country-level. On average, Syrian refugee households have been found to be larger in Lebanon compared to in Egypt, Iraq and Jordan.*

Across Iraq the average household size is reportedly the lowest in the region at 3.5, apparently due to a particularly large number of one member households.<sup>24</sup> According to preliminary REACH MSNA findings the average household size in KRI host communities was 4.3 which suggests that families could be larger in size in the KRI than Iraq as a whole. A small household size in Iraq could be the result of a prevalent returnee trend, especially from the KRI where roughly 20,000 are thought to have left to go back to Syria in the last few months of 2013.<sup>25</sup> The average household size in the seven assessed KRI refugee camps, Al Za'atari, host communities in Jordan (all REACH data) and in Egypt were fairly similar; 5.1, 5.4, 5.1 and 5.08<sup>26</sup> respectively. In contrast, Syrian refugee households in Lebanon assessed during the summer of 2013 had on average 7.7 members.<sup>27</sup> REACH was not able to find information regarding average household size for populations within Syria or Turkey.

**Household size is an important aspect in assessing food security risks.** A larger number of individuals to feed require a greater amount of economic resources, or a longer period of relying on negative coping strategies to meet the food needs of all household members. On the other hand, smaller households, or single-headed households, are also vulnerable because fewer or only one individual is able to generate income or adopt coping strategies to meet food needs, rather than several individuals that can pool their efforts together. In regards to food assistance, it is essential to know how many people per household require food to ensure that it is sufficient to cover the food needs of all individuals.

#### Age within the household

*Currently available information on the age demographic of Syrians within Syria estimates that 54% are adults and 46% are children.<sup>28</sup> According to figures available on the UNHCR Syria Regional Refugee Response portal, 49% of registered refugees in neighbouring countries are 18 years of age and above, which signifies a slightly greater proportion of minors (i.e. below 18 years old) in neighbouring countries than in Syria.*

As Table 1 below illustrates, households in the seven KRI camps assessed by REACH were found to comprise the largest proportion of members aged less than five years old (20%), while households in Egypt contained the largest proportion of elderly (4%). Syrian refugee households in Iraq tend to be composed of a higher proportion of men and boys (59%), while households in Lebanon included more women and girls (57%).<sup>29</sup> A significant proportion of the Syrian refugee population in each neighbouring country is below 15 years old and in some cases surpasses the proportion 16 – 59 years old.

<sup>24</sup> UNHCR, 2014 Regional Response Plan (December 2013).

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Inter-agency, Joint Assessment for Syrian Refugees in Egypt (November 2013).

<sup>27</sup> WFP/UNHCR/UNICEF, Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (December 2013).

<sup>28</sup> OCHA, Syria Crisis portal. Available at: <http://syria.unocha.org/>, last accessed 9 April 2014.

<sup>29</sup> Comparisons between 5-59 age groups was not provided here given discrepancy in age brackets when comparing UNHCR and REACH data (5-15; 16-59 in REACH data versus 5-17; 18-59 in UNHCR data).

An understanding of household demographics helps to inform appropriate food assistance as different age groups may have different food needs, particularly newly-born and infants for which specific food items may be difficult to access by Syrian households. This is also the case for elderly people and persons with a disability for whom certain foods may be inappropriate for medical or other reasons.<sup>30</sup>

Table 2 : Household profiles – age and sex

	REACH data					UNHCR data <sup>31</sup>				
	KRI camp	KRI host <sup>32</sup>	Jordan / Al Za'atari	Jordan host		Lebanon	Egypt	Turkey	Iraq	
<b>Age</b>										
0-4	20%	12%	17%	18%	0-4	19%	13%	18%	15%	
5-15	19%	27%	31%	32%	5-17	33%	30%	36%	26%	
16-59	49%	59%	45%	47%	18-59	48%	52%	43%	57%	
60+	2%	3%	3%	3%	60+	3%	4%	3%	3%	
<b>Sex</b>										
Male	51%	52%	50%	48%	Male	48%	51%	51%	59%	
Female	49%	48%	50%	52%	Female	57% <sup>33</sup>	49%	49%	41%	

In Jordan, REACH found a statistically significant correlation between the frequency of certain coping strategies used by Syrian households and the proportion of dependents in each household. Using a dependency ratio in both Al Za'atari and host communities, it was noted that as the household proportion of individuals aged 16 to 60 (i.e. of age to legally access the labour workforce) increased, the use of certain coping strategies per days of the week decreased. This was the case for reducing the number of meals a day and reducing the consumption of adults so that children could eat.<sup>34</sup>

In host communities exclusively, this was also the case for borrowing food, limiting food portion size, using credit/borrowing money, and reducing expenditure of essential non-food expenditure such as health/education. The only positive effect noted with statistical significance was that the more days spent selling household goods increased with the proportion of household individuals aged 16 to 60. This correlation merits further research as it could help to inform targeted assistance for households with an especially large proportion of dependents who have not yet reached the legal age to access employment on the Jordanian formal labour market.

### Heads of households

*Across the region, there were a greater proportion of female-headed households among the sample populations assessed in Egypt and Jordan. The lowest proportion of female-headed households was by far among the Syrian refugee population in the KRI host communities.*

The most significant disparity between the proportions of male- and female-headed households was found during preliminary findings from the REACH MSNA in KRI host communities, where only 7% of households were headed by females, compared with 22% across the KRI camps. According to REACH, 34% of households were female headed in Al Za'atari and 33% across the 12 Jordanian governorates.

<sup>30</sup> Handicap International and HelpAge International, Hidden victims of the Syrian crisis: disabled, injured and older refugees (2014).

<sup>31</sup> UNHCR Syria Regional Refugee Response portal. Available at: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>, last accessed 8 June 2014.

<sup>32</sup> It should be noted that slightly different age thresholds were used during the REACH/UNHCR MSNA data collection which were adapted to this table. These were: 0 – 3, 4 – 15, 16 – 59, 60 and above.

<sup>33</sup> Based on sex of interviewees participating in WFP/UNHCR/UNICEF, Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (December 2013).

<sup>34</sup> In both cases the p-square value proved statistically significant (<.05).

An inter-agency assessment conducted in Egypt during November 2013 across Alexandria, Damietta, Greater Cairo, Qaluyiba and Sharkia (representing 93% of the refugee population) reports that 27% of Syrian refugee households in Egypt were female headed. According to UNHCR, many male heads of households have been killed during the crisis.<sup>35</sup>

According to data collected by UNHCR during registration in October 2013, roughly 25% of households were female headed in Lebanon.<sup>36</sup> This was an increase from the 11% according to the VASyR conducted during May and June 2013.<sup>37</sup> A report published by the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD)<sup>38</sup> in June 2013 stated that 17% of Syrian refugee households in the camps and 22% outside the camps in Turkey were female headed.<sup>39</sup>

REACH was not able to find the proportion of male and female headed households in Syria.

The comparably high percentage of female-headed households in Jordan may be explained by a high rate of returnees to Syria which anecdotal evidence suggests are primarily male. In 2013, approximately 50,000 refugees returned to Syria from Jordan, according to the Government of Jordan (GoJ);<sup>40</sup> however the proportion of male and female returnees was not specified. Further research should be carried out on returnee trends and whether it is more prevalent among men. Where returning to Syria is common, this would enable to foresee where there might be more female-headed households.

REACH found that slightly more female-headed households in Jordan host communities than male-headed households reported no source of income. In the KRI, slightly more female-headed households than male-headed households used consumption-related coping strategies to meet basic food needs. While generally there was no specific trend noted between the types of economic resources and coping strategies that female- and male-headed households relied on across the countries assessed, a single woman may face greater challenges as a head of household to access enough food. Reasons could include that: they are unable to find work; they cannot work because they have young children to care for; or they cannot access distribution points due to distance, feelings of intimidation or other factors. Consequently, they may be more likely to adopt negative coping strategies. **A better understanding of the factors that may drive single headed-households, in particular female headed ones, to adopt the most severe coping strategies and on a regular basis is essential to ensure appropriate assistance that mitigates the risk of food insecurity among these households.**

### Overview of household food needs

*Food is considered a priority need in Al Za'atari camp in Jordan and among non-camp Syrian refugees in Egypt, and Lebanon. In both Jordanian and KRI host communities, refugee households reported a greater need for rent support and while in the KRI camps it was cash in general. The need to cover rent is a significantly limiting factor for non-camp households and should be a priority of host community programming.*

**Inside Syria**, the final Syria Integrated Needs Assessment (SINA) report released in December 2013 found that food was the second most important concern, after health, for households in the eight governorates assessed.<sup>41</sup> Regardless, it is clear that there is extensive need for more food across the country. Early 2014, approximately 590,000 individuals were in acute need and 4.9 million in moderate need of food assistance in Syria.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Inter-agency, Joint Assessment for Syrian Refugees in Egypt (November 2013).

<sup>36</sup> UNHCR, 2014 Regional Response Plan, December 2013.

<sup>37</sup> WFP/UNHCR/UNICEF, Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (December 2013).

<sup>38</sup> The government agency responsible for responding to the Syrian crisis in Turkey.

<sup>39</sup> UNHCR, 2014 Regional Response Plan, December 2013.

<sup>40</sup> WFP/UNHCR/UNICEF, Joint Assessment Review of the Syrian Refugee Response in Jordan (January 2014).

<sup>41</sup> Households included those living in 111 districts and 38 IDP camps in the governorates of Al-Hassakeh, Aleppo, Ar-Raqqa, Deir-Ez-Zor, Hama, Homs, Idleb and Lattakia. Inter-agency, Syria Integrated Needs Assessment (December 2013).

<sup>42</sup> Assessment Working Group, Complementary Operational Analysis Report (January 2014).

**In Egypt**, roughly 75% of assessed households in Alexandria, Damietta, Greater Cairo, Qaluyiba and Sharkia said they did not have sufficient food in their household, 46% of which reported barely sufficient food. The same assessment found that food was the main household expenditure, followed by rent.<sup>43</sup>

**In Jordan**, a total of 42% of households in Al Za'atari camp said more food was their greatest need, according to REACH data. Comparatively, only 4% of Syrian refugee households in Jordanian host communities said they urgently needed more food whereas 71% said that support for rent and housing was their primary need. This suggests that the cost of rent and availability of adequate housing are particularly challenging for refugees living in Jordanian host communities and support in these areas precede access to food. In both camp and host community settings, food needs were more or less equally reported among male and female headed households.

**In the KRI**, REACH found that 19% of camp-based households needed more food – which was more frequently reported by female-headed (24%) than male-headed (17%) households. However, the most commonly reported primary household need was cash (28%), also reported by more female-headed households (31%) than male-headed households (27%). In February 2014 WFP reported that across households in both camp and host community settings, 24% in the KRI and 19% in central and southern Iraq said food was their primary need, although the time of data collection was not specified.<sup>44</sup>

Similarly to Syrian refugee households living in Jordanian host communities, initial findings from the REACH/UNHCR MSNA in the KRI host communities found that the primary household need was rent support. While, 10% of households cited just rent as their greatest concern – 8% of female-headed and 10% of male-headed households – others included it among other needs.

**In Lebanon**, the VASyR found that 75% of Syrian refugee households assessed in the country were food insecure but did not specify how food compared to other household needs.<sup>45</sup>

**In Turkey**, there is little information regarding Syrian refugee household needs outside the camps. The response here is primary led by the governmental agency AFAD, along with UNHCR in the camps,<sup>46</sup> so few comprehensive assessments have been conducted by humanitarian organisations. Furthermore, most non-camp refugees are not registered so they have not been reached by the few assessments that have occurred.<sup>47</sup> WFP reports that Syrian refugee households living in WFP/Turkish Red Crescent (TRC) supported camps tend to be food secure, with roughly 80% are relying directly on food assistance.<sup>48</sup>

## FOOD ACCESS

*This sub-section begins by assessing the availability of food through markets and relief aid; then discusses how the economic status of Syrian households in Syria and refugee host countries impacts purchasing power. Access to food - the regularity and sustainability of the means - is a significant determinant of food security as it affects whether a household will need to adopt additional coping strategies to have sufficient amounts of food. As discussed in-depth in the section Coping Strategies, (p.28), the severity of the coping mechanism used can be a more accurate depiction of the risk that a household will experience food insecurity, than the fact that it is successful in meeting an acceptable food consumption level.*

<sup>43</sup> It should be noted that the survey on expenditure included an additional 100 Syrian refugees receiving cash assistance from Islamic Relief in Greater Cairo. Half of the respondents represented those approved for assistance and the other half those that had not been approved. Inter-agency, Joint Assessment for Syrian Refugees in Egypt (November 2013).

<sup>44</sup> WFP, Syria Crisis Response: Iraq Factsheet (February 2014).

<sup>45</sup> WFP, Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: 2013 Report (December 2013).

<sup>46</sup> UNHCR, 2014 Regional Response Plan (December 2013)

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

## Food availability

This sub-section discusses the availability of food to Syrian households through markets and relief aid and the context, location and economic status of Syrian households can affect their ability to access food through these channels. Generally, host community-based households are more likely to face challenges being reached by food assistance programmes, on a regular basis or at all which makes them more reliant on the use of cash or other economic resources to access food through local markets.

### Local markets

***Markets are an important source of food for Syrian households within Syria and neighbouring countries; both as a means of accessing food when assistance is either inexistent or irregular – particularly outside camps - and to obtain greater dietary diversity than what may be provided through in-kind food.*** <sup>49</sup> *In host communities and inside Syria, where food relief is most challenging to delivery and access, Syrian households can grow dangerously reliant on having to purchase food through markets whilst simultaneously experiencing economic constraints or limited supplies of produce.*

Generally markets continue to be widely present and functioning inside Syria and neighbouring countries but access is constrained by several factors. Those registered and in possession of food vouchers or e-cards have comparatively greater purchasing power in markets than those who are un-registered,<sup>50</sup> particularly as REACH assessments in the KRI and Jordan have shown that these are used to purchase more expensive, and nutritionally diverse, food items. A household's ability to purchase food can also be affected by the level of inflation, which can vary between geographical locations, and their economic status (see *Household purchasing power*, p. 19). With relief aid generally more regular and monitored in camp settings, this leaves households living outside refugee camps more likely to be reliant on the fluctuating and at times unpredictable economic conditions in local food markets which means they are at a greater risk of food security.

**In Syria**, inflation is particularly rampant in areas that are remote (such as in the governorates of Ar Raqqa and Dar'a), or where security risks or besieged areas mean they are hard to reach for humanitarian organizations (such as Deir-Ez-Zor and Ar Raqqa, too). In these cases, supply routes may be disrupted entirely or the transport of goods rendered more costly due to security risks, resulting in an increased value of these commodities.<sup>51</sup> In the central and southern governorates of Syria, that have experienced a large proportion of the fighting, inflation is very high. This is particularly the case in Dar'a Governorate where the price of fuel rose by 50% between March and April 2014 and the cost of bread increased by 100% in the same time as fighting disrupted supply routes.<sup>52</sup> By comparison, border areas in As-Sweida, Al-Hassakeh and Damascus experienced some deflation in March 2014 when cross-border activities and imports were able to resume.<sup>53</sup> Between March and April 2014 WFP noted a stabilisation, or at times decline, in the cost of bread in many areas within Syria, though did not specify where, as a result of government support to both private and public bakeries.<sup>54</sup>

Both WFP and FAO foresee that the protracted drought in Syria will yield record low production rates of wheat, a staple food commodity in the country and regionally. Predictions that only half of what Syria was producing before the crisis will be harvested this year<sup>55</sup> imply that the price of flour and bread will continue to fluctuate as a result.<sup>56</sup> The governorates of Aleppo, Idleb, Hama, Homs and Dar'a, which previously produced roughly half of the nation's annual wheat harvest, are the most at risk.<sup>57</sup>

There are also fears that government subsidies on bread will reduce as a result of a poor wheat crop harvest<sup>58</sup> which is concerning as government subsidies have proven to help stabilise inflation.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>49</sup> UNHCR, Participatory Needs Assessment: EJC Refugee Camp (November 2013).

<sup>50</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark/Tana, The Syrian Displacement crisis and a Regional Development and Protection Programme: Mapping and Meta-Analysis of Existing Studies of Costs, Impacts and Protection (4 February 2014).

<sup>51</sup> WFP Syria Crisis Response: Situation Update 19 March – 1 April 2014 (April 2014).

<sup>52</sup> WFP Syria Crisis Response: Situation Update 2 – 15 April 2014 (April 2014).

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> FAO, Poor crop prospects reflect the impact of continued conflict and drought conditions (15 May 2014).

<sup>56</sup> WFP Syria Crisis Response: Situation Update 16 - 29 April 2014 (April 2014).

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

The delivery of food by humanitarian organizations can also contribute to appeasing inflation rates. This was noted by WFP when in late March 2014 food was delivered to Douma, Rural Damascus, which had been under siege since October 2012, and shortly afterwards certain essential food items experienced a 50% cost decrease.<sup>60</sup>

Nevertheless, while the aforementioned factors are able to assuage inflation to a certain degree these are only temporary measures and applicable in selective areas, leaving many households in remote, besieged, and hard-to-reach areas either without functioning markets or victims of acute inflation. Further compounding inflation rates and the food security crisis in Syria is a lack of agricultural activity which means the supply of food in markets is insufficient to meet demands.<sup>61</sup>

**In Egypt**, WFP reports that while inflation was consistently increasing from November 2013 it began to soften during February 2014, particularly among vegetable, dairy and the meat food groups, though has remained comparatively high to the year before.<sup>62</sup> Here too, inflation is expected to worsen in the next months due to a national scarcity of fuel experienced in March 2014 (apparently common during this time of the year and sometimes lasts into June) which will cause an increase in the cost of harvesting and transporting food.<sup>63</sup> WFP has also found that inflation in Egypt is greater in rural than urban areas where vegetables, fish, dairy products and meat are the most affected food groups.<sup>64</sup>

**In Jordan**, the Joint Assessment Review released in January 2014 found that 92% of both Jordanians and Syrians living in Jordanian communities rely on markets to access food.<sup>65</sup> REACH found that refugee households in Jordan primarily access food through WFP and their own cash. In host communities, 95% of households who eat cereal buy it with cash, and a majority in both Al Za'atari and host communities who consume tuber roots, vegetables, and fruit purchase these with cash as well. The cost of these food items could be lower than other produce which may be why refugee households prefer to use food vouchers to access more expensive items, such as meat.

These findings signify a high reliance on local markets among non-camp households in Jordan where inflation rates may be limiting accessibility to certain households. Figures from the Department of Statistics show that national prices were 18.8% greater in 2013 than for the same period recorded in 2012 following the removal of government subsidies over the years on basic food items as part of the response to economic challenges.<sup>66</sup>

**In the KRI**, REACH was not able to find a detailed analysis on markets either in camp or non-camp settings. Its own assessments have concluded that a majority of households in the seven assessed refugee camp have access cereal, pulses, oil and sweets through WFP. Tuber roots, vegetables, fruit, eggs, fish, milk, and spices on the other hand were generally bought with cash. In host communities, preliminary findings from the MSNA in the KRI governorates of Duhok, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah found that 87% of households are buying food with their own cash, compared to 8% who rely on assistance from WFP or other humanitarian organisations. Combined, these findings suggest a relatively high predisposition to buying food through markets both in camp and non-camp settings in the KRI, much like in Jordan. Food assistance to refugee households staying in host communities in the KRI is currently limited and having to rely on eroding economic resources to access food is having severe consequences on household food security. WFP reported in February 2014 that 27% of refugee households living in urban areas in the KRI said that weak purchasing power meant they were unable to purchase enough food through local markets.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> WFP Syria Crisis Response: Situation Update 2 – 15 April 2014 (April 2014).

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> FAO, Executive Brief: Syria Crisis – Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt (April 2014).

<sup>62</sup> WFP Syria Crisis Response: Situation Update 19 March – 1 April 2014 (April 2014).

<sup>63</sup> WFP Syria Crisis Response: Situation Update 2 – 15 April 2014 (April 2014).

<sup>64</sup> WFP Syria Crisis Response: Situation Update 4 – 18 March (March 2014).

<sup>65</sup> UNHCR/UNICEF/WFP, Joint Assessment Review of the Syrian Refugee Response in Jordan (January 2014).

<sup>66</sup> SNAP, Regional Analysis Syria - Part II: Host Countries – 04 April 2014 (April 2014).

<sup>67</sup> WFP, Syria Crisis Response: Iraq Factsheet (February 2014).

Similarly across Iraq, 86% of refugee households have said they do not have enough income to meet food needs – although it was not specified whether this referred to camp or host community households.<sup>68</sup>

**In Lebanon**, the recent inter-agency MSNA released in April 2014 reported that the economy has suffered from the interruption of trading routes to the Gulf countries through Syria.<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, whereas smuggling was a common mean of acquiring cheap commodities from Syria prior to the crisis, farmers in Lebanon now have to rely on more expensive items produced or acquired within Lebanon.<sup>70</sup> Unlike Syria where inflation is patchy depending on the geographical area, in late March 2014 WFP did not note any large variations in the price of food items between areas in Lebanon; and reported that the largest inflation had occurred among the price of white beans (15%), and canned tuna or meat (both 8%).<sup>71</sup> However, as certain areas like the Bekaa Valley, which is a prime agricultural area in Lebanon,<sup>72</sup> see a slight peak in violence that has already disrupted WFP food deliveries<sup>73</sup> the impact of this on inflation on markets in the area should be monitored.

REACH was not able to find detailed analysis on the areas, refugee populations or food groups affected by inflation in Turkey.

### *Food assistance*

*There has been a gradual shift to an electronic card system<sup>74</sup> which can provide refugee households with greater control and flexibility over their food purchases. Within Syria, food distributions are impeded where security risks are too high. In neighbouring countries, access to food through humanitarian assistance is most challenging for Syrian refugees living in host communities in the KRI and Turkey where food aid is either limited or very sporadic.*

#### Types and use

*WFP is the primary supplier of humanitarian food assistance across Syria and neighbouring countries with types of assistance varying depending on the country. Food vouchers and in-kind food are most common in Egypt, Jordan and the KRI, and e-cards<sup>75</sup> are more prevalent in Lebanon and Turkey. Households in the KRI, Lebanon and Syria have expressed concerns with the kind of food available in food baskets and the reliance on fuel, sometimes too expensive to purchase, to cook dry food rations.*

**In Syria**, food baskets continue to be the primary type of food assistance received by households living in the 111 sub-districts and 38 IDP camps assessed by the SINA in the governorates of Al-Hassakeh, Aleppo, Ar-Raqqa, Deir-Ez-Zor, Hama, Homs, Idleb and Lattakia during November 2013.<sup>76</sup>

**In Egypt**, food vouchers are distributed by WFP to the most vulnerable households in the deprived areas of Greater Cairo, Alexandria and Damietta, where 91% of Syrian refugees are believed to have settled.<sup>77</sup> In September 2013, the inter-agency assessment conducted in Alexandria, Damietta, Greater Cairo, Qaluyiba and Sharkia - which included areas not covered by WFP – found that 55% of households are receiving WFP food vouchers.<sup>78</sup> By April 2014, WFP reported to have reached 88,728 out of 136, 199 registered refugees (65%) with food vouchers and e-cards.<sup>79</sup> They planned to introduce the e-card system across the country in the beginning of 2014,<sup>80</sup> and as of 15 April 2014, this had begun in Greater Cairo.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Inter-agency, Multi-sector Needs Assessment in Lebanon (April 2014).

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> WFP Syria Crisis Response: Situation Update 19 March – 1 April 2014 (April 2014).

<sup>72</sup> Inter-agency, Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis (EMMA) of the Agricultural Labour Market System in North and Bekaa, Lebanon (April 2013).

<sup>73</sup> WFP Syria Crisis Response: Situation Update 19 March – 1 April 2014 (April 2014).

<sup>74</sup> Here on out referred to as 'e-cards'.

<sup>75</sup> WFP uploads credit to an electronic card which refugees use to purchase specific food items in participating stores.

<sup>76</sup> This is out of a total of 272 sub-districts in 14 governorates across Syria, including 38 IDP camps. Assessment Working Group, Complementary Operational Analysis Report (January 2014).

<sup>77</sup> UNHCR. 2014 Syria Regional Response Plan (December 2013).

<sup>78</sup> Inter-agency, Joint Assessment for Syrian Refugees in Egypt (November 2013).

<sup>79</sup> WFP Syria Crisis Response: Situation Update 19 March – 1 April 2014 (April 2014).

<sup>80</sup> UNHCR. 2014 Syria Regional Response Plan (December 2013).

<sup>81</sup> WFP. Syria Crisis Response Situation Update 2 – 15 April 2014 (April 2014).

**In Jordan**, 97% of Syrian households in Al Za'atari camp and 96% of households in host communities reported receiving food vouchers, according to REACH. In April 2014, WFP reported that e-cards had now been introduced in six out of the 12 governorates (Ajloun, Balqa, Jarash, Karak, Ma'an and Tafleeh) and was expected in Al Za'atari following UNHCR re-verification.<sup>82</sup>

**In the KRI**, according to REACH data collected between October and November 2013, 91% of households across the seven camps relied on in-kind food and 4% on paper vouchers.<sup>83</sup> In April 2014, WFP reported it had reached all ten refugee camps, including Al Obody in Anbar Governorate where security risks are high,<sup>84</sup> and the Bajet Gandela transit camp in Duhok Governorate.<sup>85</sup> WFP reports that vouchers will be increasingly implemented across the KRI<sup>86</sup>, but REACH could not find information regarding an expected introduction of e-cards.<sup>87</sup> Preliminary findings from the REACH/UNHCR MSNA in KRI host communities found that 40% of households were relying on WFP vouchers and 27% on in-kind food. The relatively small proportion accessing assistance compared to the proportion in camps reflects a lack of support to households in host communities.

**In Lebanon**, the VASyR found that 75% of Syrian refugee households had received food vouchers during the three months preceding the assessment.<sup>88</sup> Since January 2014 a majority of established refugee households have access to e-cards in Lebanon, although WFP continues to distribute one-off food parcels to recent arrivals<sup>89</sup>.

**In Turkey**, e-cards were adopted in October 2012 and are currently implemented by WFP and the Turkish Red Crescent (TRC) in 15 out of the 21 camps.<sup>90</sup> REACH was not able to find specific percentages of Syrian refugees in each camp benefiting from e-cards, but the Regional Response Plan (RRP) report released in December 2013 stated that WFP had reached 60% of refugees in the 14 camps where the organisation operated at the time. As of the beginning of April, plans were under way to introduce e-cards in the Midyat camp and were expected to be introduced in Malatya, Viranşehir, Akçakale and Nusaybin camps from May 2014.<sup>91</sup>

REACH found that 23% of households in the seven refugee camps assessed in the KRI avoided using the relief food assistance provided by aid actors. This especially concerned rice, as Syrians are more familiar with bulgur which is one of their staple foods. Furthermore, a lack of fuel to cook certain foods was identified by roughly 30% – 50% of households across the seven KRI camps; an issue which was also raised in Syria and Lebanon. According to the SINA assessment, food parcels delivered in Syria often contain dry food that needs to be cooked to enable consumption.

Rising fuel prices driven by the crisis, coupled with falling purchasing power, has reduced the ability of households to afford the fuel needed to prepare this food.<sup>92</sup> This challenge was reported in 98 out of the 173 sub-districts assessed through the SINA.<sup>93</sup> One third of Syrian households (34%) interviewed during the VASyR also reported cooking requirements as hindering the use of in-kind food.<sup>94</sup> The MSNA revealed that the number of households unable to cook at least once a day was greatest among those awaiting registration, which are deemed to experience greater insecurity than registered households.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> All receive monthly food parcels with the exception of Domiz where a voucher system has been set in place in this longer-established camp in response to a rapidly growing refugee population.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> WFP, Syria Crisis Response: Situation Update 2 – 15 April 2014 (April 2014).

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Though officially the e-card system has been introduced in Domiz camp, REACH findings suggest that in-kind food distributions and vouchers continue to be the most common types of assistance reached by Syrian households. The e-card system may not have yet been implemented in refugee camps in the KRI because these are characterised as emergency camps with few long-term retailers available to participate in this system. Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> WFP, Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: 2013 Report (December 2013).

<sup>89</sup> WFP, Syria Crisis Response: Situation Update 4 – 18 March 2014 (March 2014).

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> WFP, Syria Crisis Response: Situation Update 19 March – 1 April 2014 (April 2014).

<sup>92</sup> WFP, Syria Crisis Response: Situation Update 19 March – 1 April 2014 (April 2014).

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> WFP, Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: 2013 Report (December 2013).

<sup>95</sup> Inter-agency, Multi-sector Needs Assessment in Lebanon (April 2014).

Though they are only widely used in Lebanon and Turkey so far, e-cards have been predicted to improve dietary diversity in refugee households that have access to markets. They enable households to purchase desired foods, while eliminating time and money spent by refugees to reach food distribution sites.<sup>96</sup> Access to supermarkets that accept e-cards give refugees “a taste of normal life” (Knell, 22 March 2014).<sup>97</sup> An analysis of surveys and assessments conducted in 2013 prompted the Food Security Situation and Needs Update to conclude that 99% of camp-based Syrian refugees in Turkey who used e-cards had either a borderline or acceptable FCS.<sup>98</sup> Food vouchers were similarly found to yield greater consumption flexibility than in-kind food.<sup>99</sup> However, as WFP has noted in Turkey, the purchasing power of households using e-card is still affected by inflation as high food costs limit the amount of items they are able to purchase with the set credit.<sup>100</sup>

### Restrictions to food assistance

*Despite innovative solutions to improve food access, such as e-cards, the disproportionate availability of these or other means of food aid (i.e. vouchers or in-kind food) across geographical areas or contexts means certain refugee groups, sometimes the most vulnerable, are left with little to no food-related support. Generally speaking, a trend can be made between access to food in camp and non-camp based settings, where the latter group is more likely to experience insufficient access to food aid.*

*At the regional level, Jordan stands out in terms of food access for Syrian refugee households. REACH found that in Jordan, 98% of host community-based refugee households (approximately 80% of the total refugee population) and 99% of refugees in Al Za'atari camp had access to food assistance. In other contexts, in particular within Syria, access to food is much more limited.*

**Inside Syria**, the greatest challenge to providing food assistance is the ongoing violence and insecurity which prevents regular, if any, delivery.<sup>101</sup> An estimated three million people in Syria live in areas that are difficult for humanitarian actors to access, which has left them without humanitarian support for many months at a time.<sup>102</sup> According to the SINA primarily covering northern governorates in Syria,<sup>103</sup> the highest numbers of people with moderate and acute food needs were located in Aleppo, Lattakia and Idlib governorates.<sup>104</sup> WFP reported in March 2014 that approximately 1.2 million people have been without assistance in the eastern part of Aleppo City and surrounding rural areas since August 2013 due to constraints imposed by the crisis.<sup>105</sup> In addition, the governorates of Ar-Raqqa<sup>106</sup> and Al-Hassakeh<sup>107</sup> are particularly hard to access due to security risks. Al-Hassakeh Governorate is one of the areas with the greatest concentration of acute food need among the governorates covered by the SINA.<sup>108</sup>

Homs had the highest proportion of sub-districts of governorates assessed in the SINA reporting life-threatening food insecurity (5 out of 8); however 15 sub-districts were not covered.<sup>109</sup> Filling these information gaps is essential to ensure that all households at risk of critical food insecurity across Syria are identified. Whereas access to food assistance in Syria has somewhat improved, with WFP having reached 4.1 million people in all 14 governorates as of March 2014,<sup>110</sup> it is likely that security risks and besieged areas will continue to challenge regular access to food assistance for hundreds of thousands in the country. A greater understanding of the different challenges facing IDPs and non-IDPs to obtain food would also help to inform targeted assistance within the country.

<sup>96</sup> WFP, Syria Crisis Response: Situation Update 4 – 18 March 2014 (March 2014).

<sup>97</sup> Knell, Y, “Camp for Syrian refugees starts to look more like home”, BBC, 14 March 2014.

<sup>98</sup> The report did not distinguish the proportion of households with a borderline and acceptable FCS. ACAPS, Regional Analysis Syria: 07 February 2014 (February 2014).

<sup>99</sup> ACAPS, Regional Analysis Syria: 07 February 2014 (February 2014).

<sup>100</sup> WFP, Syria Crisis Response: Situation Update 2 – 15 April 2014 (April 2014).

<sup>101</sup> WFP, Syria Crisis Response: Situation Update 4 – 18 March 2014 (March 2014).

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> The governorates of Al-Hassakeh, Aleppo, Ar-Raqqa, Deir-Ez-Zor, Hama, Homs, Idlib and Lattakia.

<sup>104</sup> WFP, Syria Crisis Response: Situation Update 4 – 18 March 2014 (March 2014).

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> WFP, Syria Crisis Response: Situation Update 2 – 15 April 2014 (April 2014).

<sup>107</sup> WFP, Syria Crisis Response: Situation Update 4 – 18 March 2014 (March 2014).

<sup>108</sup> Inter-agency, Syria Integrated Needs Assessment (December 2013).

<sup>109</sup> Inter-agency, Syria Integrated Needs Assessment (December 2013).

<sup>110</sup> WFP, Syria Crisis Response: Situation Update 4 – 18 March 2014 (March 2014).

**In Iraq**, there is limited access to food distributions for Syrian refugees staying outside camps and WFP monitoring reports have found that 60% of Syrian refugees in host communities across Iraq are food insecure. Initial findings from the REACH/UNHCR MSNA in KRI host communities reveal that 40% of households were receiving no food assistance at all at the time of data collection in April 2014. With 60% of the refugee population in Iraq based outside camps in the KRI and Anbar Governorate,<sup>111</sup> there is an urgent need to reach these refugee populations before they become increasingly at risk of food insecurity.

**In Lebanon**, food assistance operations in some areas have recently been affected by arising security risks, particularly in the Bekaa Valley, where large influxes of refugees were reported by WFP in mid-April 2014. The VASyR also found that although food vouchers represented the predominant mode of accessing food amongst registered Syrian refugees, recent arrivals and those awaiting registration had no access to food assistance, which may render them particularly vulnerable to food insecurity.<sup>112</sup> In fact, both the VASyR and the recent inter-agency MSNA published in April 2014 point out that little information is known about recent arrivals, particularly in the areas of Akkar and the Bekaa valley, where security risks are currently the greatest.<sup>113</sup>

**In Turkey**, access to food is much more regular and monitored in refugee camps where the government has encouraged WFP to concentrate their efforts. It now covers 16 out of the 22 refugee camps in the country.<sup>114</sup> Assistance to host community based refugees is intermittently provided by social security groups and various NGOs (which were not specified),<sup>115</sup> despite the fact that almost three times the amount of camp-based refugees in Turkey are predicted to be living outside camp.<sup>116</sup> A majority of these were not yet registered by December 2013 according to the final RRP6 report so few comprehensive information about their needs is known.<sup>117</sup> In addition, WFP noted that it did not have access to Yayladagi 1 and Yayladagi 2 camps during March and April 2014 because of security risks related to shelling that has occurred near the border with Syria, where the camps are based.<sup>118</sup>

REACH was not able to find information regarding particular challenges in delivering food assistance to specific areas in Egypt.

### *Household purchasing power*

*Savings was the primary economic resource for households living in refugee camps in the KRI whereas refugees in Egypt and Lebanon appeared to rely primarily on salaries. In both Jordanian host communities and the KRI, 23% of households had no economic resource at all. Generally speaking, findings suggest there is easier access to employment for refugee households living outside camps, whereas those in camps are more likely to have to rely on savings or borrowing money which accelerates the exhaustion of available economic household resources and susceptibility to using negative coping strategies.*

**In Egypt**, an inter-agency assessment which surveyed households in Alexandria, Damietta, Greater Cairo, Qaluyiba and Sharkia in September 2013 found that Syrian refugees have had relatively good access to the labour market; 43% of respondents relied on their salary as a principal economic source to cover basic household needs.<sup>119</sup> However, employment opportunities in Egypt may suffer with the unfavourable economic climate that is developing, and could be further challenged by increasing animosity towards Syrian refugees.<sup>120</sup> The second most important economic resource for Syrian households in Egypt was borrowed money (28%).<sup>121</sup>

<sup>111</sup> UNHCR, 2014 Regional Response Plan (December 2013).

<sup>112</sup> WFP, Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: 2013 Report (December 2013).

<sup>113</sup> Inter-agency, Multi-sector Needs Assessment in Lebanon (April 2014).

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> UNHCR, 2014 Regional Response Plan (December 2013).

<sup>116</sup> Afanasieva, D, "Syrian brave life outside crammed Turkish refugee camps", Reuters, 26 March 2014. Available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/03/26/us-syria-refugees-idUSBREA2P0PC20140326>, last accessed 25 May 2014.

<sup>117</sup> UNHCR, 2014 Regional Response Plan (December 2013).

<sup>118</sup> WFP, Syria Crisis Response: Situation Update 2 – 15 April 2014 (April 2014).

<sup>119</sup> Inter-agency, Joint Assessment for Syrian Refugees in Egypt (November 2013).

<sup>120</sup> WFP, Global Food Security Update: Tracking food security trends in vulnerable countries. Issue 13 February 2014 (February 2014).

<sup>121</sup> Inter-agency, Joint Assessment for Syrian Refugees in Egypt (November 2013).

It noted that refugees that had arrived in the country in 2013 had little or no financial assets whereas those who had arrived in 2012 had primarily relied on savings to cover household needs. Twenty-two per cent of households assessed in September 2013 used savings as their primary purchasing source.<sup>122</sup>

**In Jordan**, an important proportion of Syrian refugee households in Al Za'atari camp (32%) and in host communities (21%) said they rely on credit or borrowed money to cover their basic needs. REACH found that credit or borrowed money was generally obtained through a network of family and friends, as opposed to formal channels (e.g. banks and money lenders), which may explain why it is so prevalent.

The second most commonly reported primary economic household resource in Al Za'atari was savings (16%) and unskilled labour in host communities (18%). In Al Za'atari camp, a greater percentage of female-headed (37%) than male-headed (30%) households used credit or borrowed money to access food, whereas fewer female-headed households were slightly less likely to report using savings (15%) compared to male-headed households (16%). In host communities, both 21% of female-headed and male-headed households said they used credit or borrowed money to obtain food, and roughly the same proportion said they had access to unskilled labour (14% and 17%, respectively).

Almost a quarter (23%) of refugee households in Jordanian host communities said they had no economic resource at all, with slightly more female-headed (23%) households than male-headed (22%) reporting this. In stark contrast, less than 1% of households in Al Za'atari reported having no economic resource; hence it could be concluded that financial resources are less likely to have been eroded among refugee households in camps, perhaps because they receive food assistance on a more regular basis. Also interesting to note is that no female-headed households in Al Za'atari said they had no source of money.

**In the KRI**, the most commonly reported primary economic resource for covering basic household needs in the camps was savings (37%) – which was less reported by female-headed (27%) than male-headed (40%) households. Fourteen per cent of the population relied on wages from non-agricultural labour, which was more or less equally reported by female-headed and male-headed households. Twenty-three per cent of households in the seven KRI camps said they had no access to an economic source which was more commonly cited by female-headed households (27%) than male-headed (21%).

By comparison, preliminary findings from the REACH/UNHCR MSNA conducted in three KRI governorates found that the most common economic resource for households was employment, more specifically skilled wage labour (68%) and unskilled wage labour (19%). While the former was reported by slightly less female-headed households than male-headed households (57% and 69%, respectively), the latter was cited by slightly more (21% and 19%, respectively) which could suggest that female-headed household members find it more challenging to access skilled wage labour.

It should be noted that whereas in the KRI camps and Jordan a significant proportion of households reported no economic source at all, this was not the case among primary channels of economic resources for refugee households living in host communities in the KRI. However, 87% of households said they had no secondary source of income – cited by 87% of female-headed and 80% of male-headed households. This suggests a high reliance on access to skilled or unskilled labour to maintain household economic resources.

**In Lebanon**, the VASyR found that more than 50% of the households assessed across the country used their salary as the main household economic resource; 28% from non-agricultural casual labour and 25% from skilled labour. Almost 30% used humanitarian assistance as their main livelihood source, primarily food vouchers. Those awaiting registration usually relied on savings, though the VASyR found that these were usually exhausted after six months<sup>123</sup> which confirms the fact that households not yet registered are especially at risk of food security.

The inter-agency MSNA pointed out that access to food is greatly affected by a lack of income generating activities, which ensures that households have the economic resources to buy food.<sup>124</sup>

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

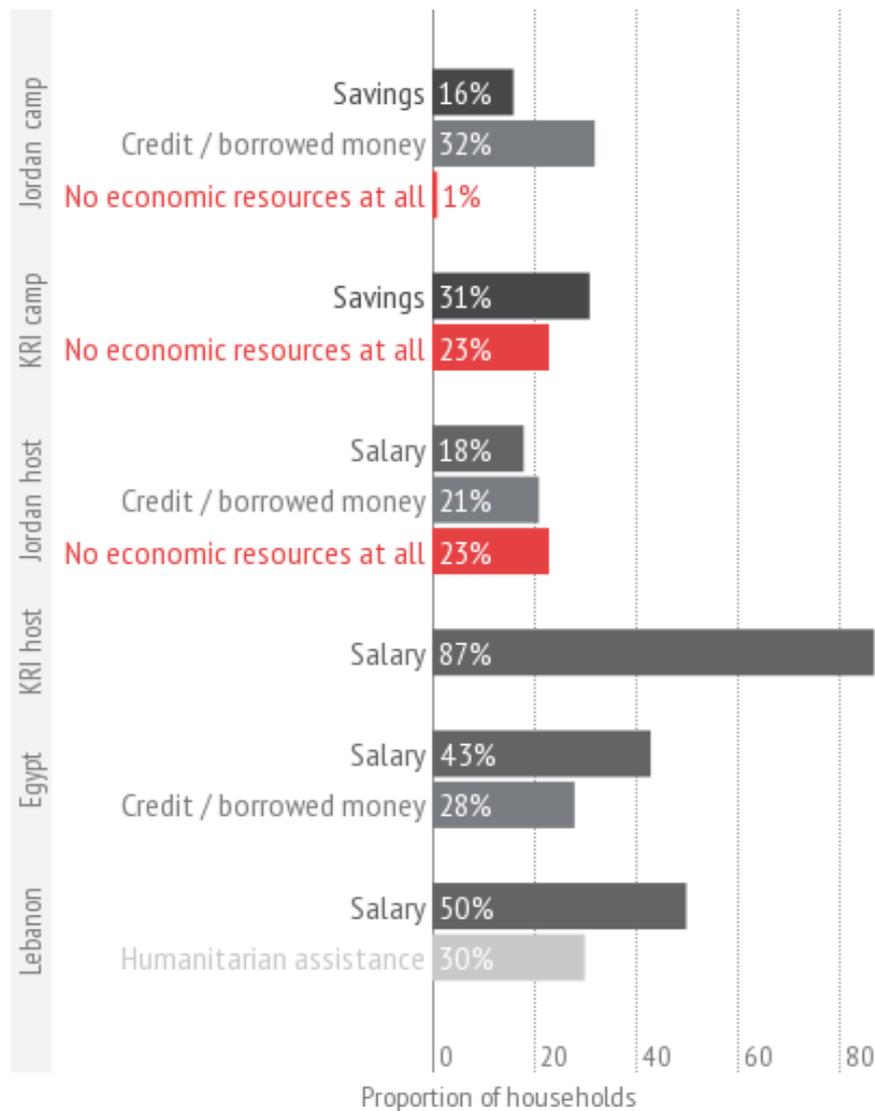
<sup>123</sup> WFP, Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: 2013 Report (December 2013).

<sup>124</sup> Inter-agency, Multi-sector Needs Assessment in Lebanon (April 2014).

Data collected by WFP during May and June 2013, showed that savings was the primary source to cover household needs amongst refugee households waiting to be registered, who were also more likely to rely on loans and the sale of assets, than households who have been in Lebanon for a longer period of time.<sup>125</sup> However, banks and money lenders are usually reluctant to grant loans to new arrivals hence, similarly to Jordan, the principal sources of loans were family and friends. According to this same assessment, the longer households had stayed in Lebanon the more reliant they had become on relief assistance to access food and, consequently, the less food insecurity they were experiencing.<sup>126</sup>

REACH could not find specific information on primary sources to cover household needs amongst Syrian refugees in Turkey or within Syria. **Across the region, the availability of savings may be related to the length of time lived in Syria during the crisis before arriving in the host country;** this potential correlation should be further researched to assess the vulnerability of households leaving in Syria over three years into the crisis. Figure 2 outlines the primary household economic resources across the region.

Figure 2: Regional comparison of primary household economic resources



<sup>125</sup> WFP, Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: 2013 Report (December 2013).

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

## FOOD CONSUMPTION

*Dietary diversity affects food consumption scores, which is one of the determining factors of food security. This sub-section begins by discussing, broadly, changes in patterns of consumption across the region and then compares food consumption scores by country and context. It also briefly theorizes the impact of household economic resources, needs and time of arrival into the neighbouring country on food consumption based on data collected by REACH and secondary sources.*

It should be noted that with the information available, **REACH was unable to find a significant demarcation between food consumption patterns and scores across different contexts, though in both cases the situation of households living in camps in the KRI seems at a disadvantage.** It is also worth mentioning that little information exists on non-camp based refugees in the Egypt, Iraq and Turkey to draw comparisons with camp based and non-camp households in other neighbouring countries.

### Food consumption profile

*REACH and secondary sources have found that the consumption of fruit and meat have been most affected by the Syrian Crisis for refugee households in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan Lebanon, and Syria.. This could be explained by the lack of fruit provided through in-kind food and the propensity for meat to be among the more expensive food items.*

**In Syria**, cereals (generally wheat flour and bread), vegetables, potatoes and oil are the most commonly eaten food groups with a decline in the consumption of fruit, meat, dairy products and eggs.<sup>127</sup>

**In Jordan**, REACH found that the most common food groups not consumed at all prior to the day of assessment by both camp-based and host community refugee households were fruit - not eaten by 77% in both Al Za'atari and host communities - followed by fish, which was not consumed by 56% in Al Za'atari and 82% in host communities.

**In the KRI**, Syrian refugee households in the camps were found to forfeit a wider range of foods from their diets than those assessed in Jordan with a majority not having consuming fruit, meat and milk at all prior to the assessment. The REACH/UNHCR MSNA in the KRI host communities found that the most common food groups not to have been consumed at all in the week prior to the assessment were fruit, meat and fish.

**In Lebanon**, the inter-agency MSNA found that generally the refugee population has access to most of the food groups though consumption is highest for bread, condiments and sugar which are considered low in terms of nutritional value.<sup>128</sup> The VASyR reported that a majority of Syrian refugee households who reported not having access to sufficient food, which was most common among recent arrivals those who had been in Lebanon for more than six months, were not consuming meat and fish, pulses, dairy, oil, fat and sugar.<sup>129</sup>

Future research could assess what food commodities are most affected by inflation, to what extent this affects their consumption, and subsequently how nutritional levels are impacted. For example, the removal of protein-rich food such as meat and other nutritional produce such as dairy and fruit could have health implications in the long-term, particularly among young children, pregnant or lactating women, and elderly persons. The VASyR found that a greater proportion of households with an acceptable FCS were eating animal protein compared to households with a poor FCS,<sup>130</sup> which shows the direct affect that food consumption patterns could have on the potential of experiencing food insecurity.

<sup>127</sup> FAO/WFP, Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission to the Syrian Arab Republic (July 2013).

<sup>128</sup> Inter-agency, Multi-sector Needs Assessment in Lebanon (April 2014).

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> WFP, Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: 2013 Report (December 2013).

## Food consumption scores

The food consumption score (FCS) developed by WFP is a composite score based on frequency of consumption and the nutritional value of food consumed.<sup>131</sup> Across the region, a majority of refugee households in Egypt, Jordan (both in Al Za'atari and host communities), KRI host communities, Lebanon and in refugee camps in Turkey have an acceptable FCS. **The greatest proportion of households with a poor FCS was reported among camp-based households in the KRI.** While FCS is a good indicator of food security, it should be weighed against the use of severe coping strategies to achieve levels of food consumption in order to more precisely determine risks of food insecurity among Syrian households.

**In Egypt**, WFP monitoring has shown that FCS among households had risen from 70% to 80% through 2013 as coverage of WFP vouchers expand,<sup>132</sup> though it does not specify the geographical location or the proportion with a borderline and poor FCS. Nevertheless, WFP also found that food consumption overall was lower in 2013 than it was when last assessed in November 2012, particularly among households who do not have access to WFP food vouchers.<sup>133</sup> This could be linked with recent inflation which has weakened household purchasing power and the value of food aid, coupled with eroding economic resources.

**In Jordan**, WFP monitoring reports found that generally a low proportion of Syrian refugee households have a poor or borderline FCS (5% and 13% respectively)<sup>134</sup> And REACH data corroborates this. In Al Za'atari REACH data found that 95% of households have an acceptable FCS; 5% have a borderline and 1% a poor score. Amongst those in host communities, 90% had an acceptable FCS; 8% a borderline; and 2% a poor score.<sup>135</sup> In neither case was there a significant difference between the percentage of female and male-headed households with an acceptable or poor FCS.

**In the KRI**, across the seven refugee camps assessed by REACH, 55% of households had an acceptable FCS, cited for 48% of female-headed and 56% of male-headed households. Twenty-one per cent had borderline and 24% had a poor FCS.<sup>136</sup> A greater proportion of female-headed households were reported to have a poor FCS (27%) than male-headed households (24%). By contrast, preliminary findings from the REACH/UNHCR MSNA conducted in the governorates of Duhok, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah showed that 92% of households had an acceptable FCS – 88% of female-headed and 92% of male-headed respectively. Furthermore, 7% had a borderline and 2% had a poor FCS. This could have to do with the fact that non-camp refugee households have access to a wider variety of produce through available markets thereby increasing their dietary diversity, a component of the food consumption score. On this point, REACH found that Darashakran refugee camp, which had the highest proportion of refugee households with a poor FCS (48%), also had a poor market system and little to no access to outside markets. A similar situation was found in Basirma and Gawilan camps, also with poorly developed market systems, which hosted the second and third largest proportion of households with a poor FCS (35% and 22% of households, respectively).

**In Lebanon**, WFP also found a comparatively large proportion of Syrian refugee households with an acceptable FCS between May and June 2013 (93%). However, the same report stated that roughly 70% of households assessed across the country were food insecure, primarily mildly at the time. WFP remarked that although food consumption was adequate, it was maintained through the use of negative coping strategies, which essentially left households at risk of food insecurity in the future.<sup>137</sup>

**In Turkey**, WFP monitoring has found that 90% of refugee households in camps supported by WFP and the TRC had an acceptable FCS, although the time of data collection was not specified.<sup>138</sup> No information was found relating to FCS amongst host community-based refugees in Turkey.

<sup>131</sup> WFP, Food Consumption Analysis: Calculation and use of the food consumption score in food security analysis. (2008).

<sup>132</sup> Inter-agency, Joint Assessment for Syrian Refugees in Egypt (November 2013). The geographical coverage of these exercises was not specified.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> UNHCR/UNICEF/WFP, Joint Assessment Review of the Syrian Refugee Response in Jordan (January 2014).

<sup>135</sup> These add up to 101% due to rounding error.

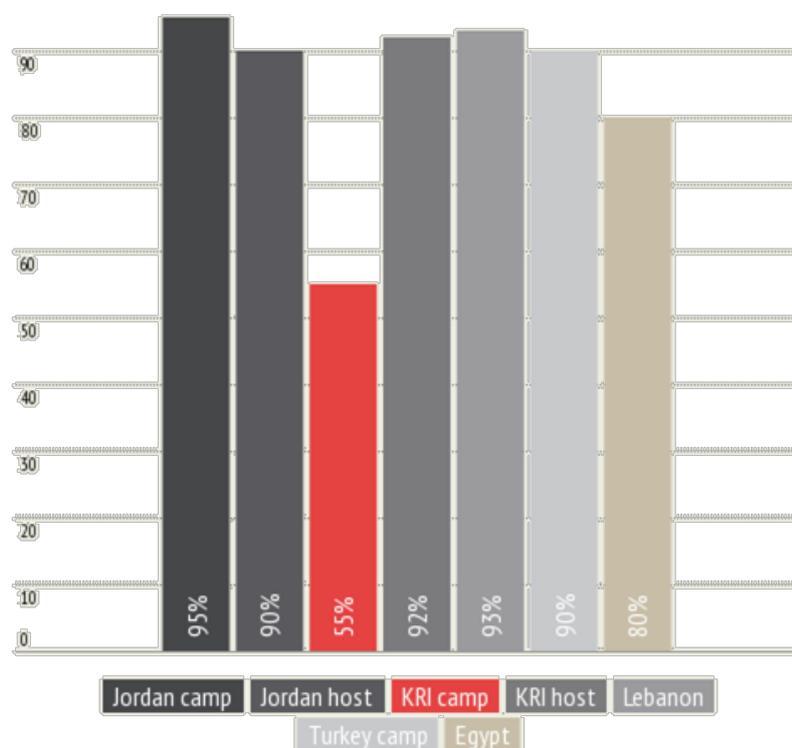
<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> WFP, Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: 2013 Report (December 2013).

<sup>138</sup> UNHCR, 2014 Regional Response Plan (December 2013).

REACH was not able to find any information regarding FCS for households inside Syria.

Figure 3: Regional comparison of the proportion of households with an acceptable FCS



### Food Consumption Score and economic resources

REACH data suggests that a lack of economic resources means a household is more likely to have a poor FCS, which supports the need for adequate livelihood programmes among refugee households, particularly in areas where food assistance is irregular or limited and there is a greater reliance on household economic resources to buy food..

WFP monitoring has found no direct link between low income and poor food consumption scores (FCS).<sup>139</sup> In Jordan however, REACH data suggests that a greater proportion of households in both Al Za'atari and host communities with a poor FCS score had no economic resource (14% and 7%, respectively), compared to households with an acceptable score (<1% and 5% respectively). REACH also found that in the seven camps assessed in the KRI, a greater proportion of households with a poor FCS reported having no economic resource (26%) compared with those with an acceptable FCS (18%). However, due to the small sample size when disaggregating to this level, the statistical significance of these findings could not be asserted.<sup>140</sup>

Nevertheless, secondary sources suggest that access to food is hampered by limited economic resources. Thus, the relationship between purchasing power (lack of income or other economic resources) and access to food should be further explored. This becomes particularly relevant in areas where food assistance might be prevented or irregular, leaving refugee households more reliant on accessing food through their own means.

<sup>139</sup> UNHCR/UNICEF/WFP, Joint Assessment Review of the Syrian Refugee Response in Jordan (January 2014).

<sup>140</sup> In both cases due to at least one cell count less than 5 in the chi-square test that was performed, which leaves the test results uncertain.

### Food Consumption Score and household need

*Overall, REACH data suggests a correlation between poor FCS and food as the primary household need in the camps. However, among refugee households in host communities other needs take priority over food regardless of a household's FCS which shows effective and targeted programming must be informed by priority needs that are determined by refugee households themselves.*

In Al Za'atari, REACH found that a greater proportion of households with a poor FCS (71%) said food was their primary household need, compared to those with an acceptable FCS (42%).<sup>141</sup> In the KRI camps, 21% of households with a poor FCS compared with 16% of households an acceptable FCS cited food as their primary need. However, due to the small sample size when disaggregating to this level in both contexts, the statistical significance of these findings could not be asserted.<sup>142</sup>

**Further research is needed on the relationship between poor food consumption and primary needs in different contexts.** As previously discussed, in Jordan a majority of host community Syrian refugee households identified support for rent as their greatest concern which could take precedent over food regardless of their FCS. In fact, REACH data shows that a greater proportion of households with a poor FCS (69%) than with an acceptable FCS (64%) said their most urgent non-cash need was rent, whereas a smaller proportion said they need more food (4% and 8%, respectively). In this case, providing these households with food or vouchers may not necessarily accurately contribute to either their livelihood or food security as they may be tempted to sell their food aid to cover the cost of rent. Initial findings from the REACH/UNHCR MSNA also shows that food may not always be the primary concern of households with a poor FCS, as a majority of those assessed in the KRI host communities (20%) cited a combination of food, rent and medicine as their greatest household need. Only 3% of households reported food alone and among these were only households with a borderline or acceptable FCS. WFP monitoring has found that some refugee households in host communities in Jordan are selling their food aid to pay for non-food related items because they are receiving less non-food related assistance. In fact, this is why WFP estimates that food insecurity is slightly worse (by 5%) in host communities in Jordan than in camps.<sup>143</sup>

### Food Consumption Score and time of arrival

*In both Jordan and Lebanon households may be more likely to have an acceptable FCS the long they have been in the country.*

In Lebanon, the vulnerability assessment in May and June 2013 concluded that the more time spent in Lebanon, generally six months or more, the less food insecurity households experienced which was attributed to better access to food assistance than unregistered households or recent arrivals.<sup>144</sup>

In Jordan, the length of stay was found to have a very slight positive effect on FCS, with the average household score increasing the longer a household had stayed in the country. No statistically significant effect was found between FCS and length of stay in the KRI.

**Nevertheless, further research is recommended to assess the correlation between the time spent in a host country and food security.** This might act as a monitoring exercise on the accessibility and impact of food assistance, and/or serve to inform targeted programming towards Syrian households who are entering neighbouring countries for the first time and who may have exhausted their savings when inside Syria due to irregular or total lack of access to food.

<sup>141</sup> In host communities, no households with a poor FCS reported the need for food as a primary household concern, and 4% of those with an acceptable FCS did.

<sup>142</sup> In both cases due to at least one cell count less than 5 in the chi-square test that was performed, which leaves the test results uncertain.

<sup>143</sup> UNHCR/UNICEF/WFP, Joint Assessment Review of the Syrian Refugee Response in Jordan (January 2014).

<sup>144</sup> WFP, The Coping Strategy Index: Field Methods Manual (January 2008).



## COPING STRATEGIES

*This sub-section compares the predominant consumption-related (i.e. short term) and non-consumption related (i.e. long-term) coping strategies used by Syrian households in Syria and neighbouring countries. **Reducing the number of meals per day, using savings, taking credit or borrowing money are the most commonly adopted across the region.** These could have severe effects on nutritional intake and health, as well as lead to financial challenges that could compound food insecurity in the future.*

According to REACH from the KRI and Jordan, broadly speaking coping strategies were more commonly used among camp-based than non-camp-based households. The difference was especially stark in the KRI, though non-camp households here were more likely to use long-term, non-consumption-related strategies whereas the opposite trend was noted in Jordan. Furthermore, whereas more households in the KRI host communities had exhausted their savings, again the opposite was found in Jordan.

These findings imply a more critical situation regarding the use of coping strategies for refugee households in the KRI host communities and camp-based households in Jordan. In both cases, acceptable FCS scores may be maintained by a majority of the refugee population but through the use of unsustainable coping strategies which put them at a greater risk of experiencing food insecurity in the future; the impact which has already been revealed in Al Za'atari where over a quarter of refugee households have already exhausted their savings.

A better understanding of the push and pull factors affecting the adoption of short-term and long-term coping strategies among Syrian households will enable targeted assistance to adequately respond to, but also begin to mitigate, risks of food insecurity.

REACH data in the KRI camps and across Jordan did find a statistically significant relationship between the use of coping strategies and FCS, whereby the greater a household's FCS the less likely they were to adopt negative coping strategies on a regular basis. This certainly merits greater attention, particularly as it suggests that **the ability to access regular and sufficient food has a direct impact on the likelihood to adopt negative and unsustainable coping strategies that only further compound the potential to experience food insecurity.**

It should also be noted that large proportions of refugee households in the KRI camps, Jordan host communities and Al Za'atari are receiving some kind of food assistance and equally large proportions are adopting coping strategies. On the other hand, a limited proportion of refugee households in the KRI host communities have access to food assistance and an equally small proportion say they are using coping strategies, especially short-term, consumption-related ones. REACH was not able to come to any statistically significant conclusions regarding this, but context-specific reasons behind these results should be further investigated.

### Coping strategy: definition and index scores

Coping strategies are the actions individuals adopt to 'cope' with not having enough food. The Coping Strategy Index (CSI) is an inter-agency tool developed to assess level of food security based on the behaviour adopted when households are unable to access enough food.<sup>145</sup>

The average CSI score across the seven camps assessed by REACH in the KRI was 22 compared to 14 among host community refugee households in Duhok, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah. Conversely, REACH found the opposite trend in Jordan, where the average score was 14 in Al Za'atari compared to 21 in host community households. **This indicates that coping strategy used is more severe in the camp setting in the KRI compared to the community, while the reverse is seen in Jordan.**

<sup>145</sup> WFP, The Coping Strategy Index: Field Methods Manual (January 2008).

REACH was not able to find CSI scores for Syrian households in Syria or other neighbouring countries.

### Coping strategies used in Syria

Across the 111 sub-districts and 38 IDP camps assessed by the SINA in northern Syria,<sup>146</sup> 27% of households were said to be eating food that was cheaper/less preferred and 20% said they consumed fewer meals each day.<sup>147</sup> The most common non-consumption-related food strategies were borrowing money or depending on help from charities and family (23%).<sup>148</sup> Whilst the SINA identified types of primary negative coping strategies used by Syrian IDP households, it did not capture the total percentage of the assessed population using coping strategies.

### Coping strategies used in Egypt

A joint assessment in Alexandria, Damietta, Greater Cairo (Cairo, Giza, Qalyubia), and Sharkia between September and October 2013 found that of households using negative coping strategies; 68% were eating two meals per day, 39% were using savings; 27% buying food with credit; and 21% selling their assets.<sup>149</sup> The greatest proportions of households using coping strategies were in Cairo, Damietta and Giza though the assessment found that the overall proportion had decreased from 64% in November 2012 to 18% at the time of the assessment.<sup>150</sup> WFP noted that the proportion of households adopting coping strategies is lower among those receiving WFP vouchers.<sup>151</sup> Participants in the joint assessment expressed concerns with the potential nutritional and health concerns related to reducing their daily consumption, as well as eating cheaper and lower quality food, particularly animal-protein produce and fruit.<sup>152</sup> **This highlights the importance of addressing factors contributing to the adoption of coping strategies, particularly to mitigate the impact certain actions have on food consumption, nutrition and health.**

### Coping strategies used in Jordan

In Al Za'atari camp, 95% of households reported using coping strategies related to consumption in the seven days prior to the assessment. In host communities, the prevalence of consumption-related coping strategies was very similar (96%). In both cases this was reported almost equally by male and female headed households. Among households in both Al Za'atari and in host communities the most common consumption-related coping strategy used was reliance on less preferred or less expensive food (93% and 90% of households, respectively). Overall, REACH noted no significant difference between the proportion of male and female headed households that reported using this strategy.

The second most common consumption-related strategy was eating fewer meals a day; reported by 60% in Al Za'atari and 78% in host communities. In Al Za'atari fewer female-headed (55%) households reported reducing the number of meals than male-headed (62%) households, whereas in host communities slightly more female-headed households cited it than male headed households (79% and 77% respectively).

<sup>146</sup> Al-Hassakeh, Aleppo, Ar-Raqqa, Deir-Ez-Zor, Hama, Homs, Idleb and Lattakia governorates.

<sup>147</sup> Inter-agency, Syria Integrated Needs Assessment (December 2013).

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Inter-agency, Joint Assessment for Syrian Refugees in Egypt (November 2013).

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

**Over half of all host community based households (56%) in Jordan reported restricting the consumption of adults for children to eat**, compared to 30% in Al Za'atari. There was little difference in the proportion of male headed and female headed households that reported using this strategy (<1%).

REACH data shows that a slightly greater proportion of households in host communities reported using short-term, consumption-related coping strategies, especially in regards to restriction of meals and adult consumption. According to an inter-agency assessment across Jordan between September and October 2013, host community-based refugee households were more likely to adopt coping strategies because they are less likely to have regular access to food through humanitarian assistance.<sup>153</sup> However, the opposite trend occurs when looking at non-consumption related strategies, which suggests a greater propensity to adopting more severe, long-term action in Al Za'atari. As previously mentioned, a greater proportion of households in Al Za'atari had already exhausted their savings which might explain this trend.

In Al Za'atari, 94% of households reported having adopted non-consumption related coping strategies in the 30 days prior to the assessment, and 88% in host communities; almost equally cited by male and female headed households in both contexts. The most reported non-consumption related coping strategy in both Al Za'atari and host communities was buying food on credit or with borrowed money (76% and 58%, respectively).

No significant difference between the proportion of female-headed and male-headed households reporting this was noted. In both contexts, using savings was the second most frequent non-consumption related coping strategy, reported by 39% of households in Al Za'atari and 36% in host communities. More female-headed than male-headed households reported using savings in each context but the difference was less than 4%. **An equally high percentage of households had already exhausted their savings as coping strategy to meet basic food needs; 28% in Al Za'atari and 25% in host communities.**

In Jordan, higher coping strategy use was seen to be related with lower FCS. The effect was weak but statistically significant – a 1 point increase in FCS was associated with on average a 0.02 point decrease in CSI.

### Coping strategies used in Iraq

In the seven camps in the KRI assessed by REACH, 87% of households were using short-term, consumption-related coping strategies in the week preceding the assessment. By contrast, 12% of households reported using the same strategies in KRI host communities – 1% of female-headed and 11% of male-headed households - according to initial findings from the REACH/UNHCR MSNA.

As in Jordan, relying on less preferred or less expensive food was reported by a majority of camp-based households (78%); with a slightly greater proportion of female-headed households reporting this than male-headed households (80% and 76%, respectively). According to preliminary findings from the REACH/UNHCR MSNA, it was also the most commonly reported in host communities (11%); by 16% of female-headed and 10% of male-headed households. The comparatively low majority suggests that overall consumption-related coping strategies are not widely used by refugee households in this context.

Other commonly reported coping strategies in the KRI camps were **reducing the consumption of females in the household (62%), restricting the consumption of adults in general (59%)** and reducing number of meals a day (58%). No substantial difference existed between the proportion of male and female headed households that reported limiting the consumption of food for women or adults in the household.

<sup>153</sup> UNHCR, Inter-agency Regional Response for Syrian Refugees: Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, 26 September – 2 October 2013 (October 2013).

WFP reported in February 2014 that across both camp and host community refugees in all of Iraq, some were reducing the number of meals to one or two a day. However, the predominant strategy used was eating less preferred food, particularly meat and fresh foods.<sup>154</sup>

REACH found that in the seven KRI camps assessed, 86% of households were using non-consumption related coping strategies in the 30 days before the assessment – 83% of female-headed and 87% of male-headed households. In host communities, the MSNA found that 54% of refugee households – 4% of female-headed compared to 50% of male-headed households – are using the same kind of coping strategies. While this suggests less prevalence of coping strategies among refugee households in the KRI host communities, it does also show that they are more likely to adopt long-term than short-term strategies.

**In both the refugee camps and host communities, according to preliminary MSNA findings, the use of savings was the most commonly reported non consumption-related strategy.** Sixty-six per cent of households in the seven refugee camps are reliant on their savings – reported by 59% of female-headed and 67% of male-headed households - with 8% of all households already having exhausted this coping strategy (no significant difference between the two groups of household heads).

In KRI host communities, preliminary findings from the REACH/UNHCR MSNA show that 24% of Syrian refugee households are using their savings as a coping strategy – 36% of female-headed and 23% of male-headed households. Twelve per cent of host community households have exhausted their savings, slightly more than in the camps (8%). This was reported by slightly more female-headed than male-headed households in host communities (14% and 12%, respectively) whereas it was the opposite in the camps (with a difference <1%). Across all of Iraq, the RRP6 confirms that household debt is prevalent and a majority of households had already exhausted their savings,<sup>155</sup> although no specific proportions were provided.

The second commonly reported non-consumption related coping strategies in the KRI camps was reducing essential non-food expenditure such as education/health (32%) – reported by 32% of female-headed and 36% of male-headed households. This was followed by using credit or borrowing money (28%) - cited by 25% of female-headed and 29% of male-headed households – whereas it was the second most reported in host communities. According to preliminary MSNA findings, 19% of households were using credit or borrowing money as a long-term coping mechanism, 22% of female-headed and 19% of male-headed households.

Similar to Jordan, higher food consumption scores were associated with slightly lower coping strategy use, accepting the slightly lower significance level of  $p=0.062$ .

### Coping strategies used in Lebanon

The inter-agency MSNA in Lebanon reported that the most common consumption-related coping strategies used in Lebanon are buying less expensive food items and eating fewer meals a day.<sup>156</sup> The most recent assessment conducted by the Lebanese Society for Education and Social Development (LSESD) Food Aid Project between July and December 2013 found that 30% are eating smaller meals and 24% of households are having fewer meals.<sup>157</sup>

The VASyR conducted in May and June 2013 found that a majority of the 45% of refugee households assessed during the VASyR who reported using a coping strategy to meet basic food needs relied on less preferred or less expensive food (89%).<sup>158</sup> Many households also said they ate fewer (65%) or smaller (69%) meals. However, the

<sup>154</sup> WFP, Syria Crisis Response: Iraq Factsheet (February 2014).

<sup>155</sup> UNHCR, 2014 Regional Response Plan (December 2013).

<sup>156</sup> Inter-agency, Multi-sector Needs Assessment in Lebanon (April 2014).

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> WFP, Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: 2013 Report (December 2013).

geographic coverage of the two assessments are not specified are therefore might not be comparable. **Almost half (49%) of assessed households during the VASyR using coping mechanisms said that adults in the household ate less to enable children to eat, and 8% reduced the consumption of women in the household.**<sup>159</sup>

WFP has noted that there is a higher proportion of households using coping strategies in the north of Lebanon.<sup>160</sup> Handicap International's assessment in North Lebanon, Bekaa, Beirut City and Mount Lebanon governorates among people with special needs found that roughly 50% of the households in Tripoli were only eating one or two meals a day.<sup>161</sup>

The most common non-consumption related coping strategies are the use of savings and buying food on credit.<sup>162</sup> The VASyR found that 70% refugee households across the country, both awaiting and registered, had taken credit or borrowed money in the three months prior to the assessment, and 81% of these had done it to buy food. The LSESD found that 36% are using this coping mechanism,<sup>163</sup> though again the geographical coverage of these two assessments could not accurately be compared. The same assessment found that roughly 70% of households reported having debts.<sup>164</sup>

According to a baseline winterisation assessment that took place in several unspecified distribution points across Lebanon in December 2013, using credit or borrowing money remained the most prevalent coping strategies for registered refugees, with 30% of households reporting having debts.<sup>165</sup> Whereas the level of geographical coverage and hence comparability between the two assessments is unknown, it is clear that using credit or borrowing money is common in Lebanon and may have an effect on the amount of households accumulating debt.

Handicap International's report also noted that while registered refugees relied more on food-related mechanisms, non-registered refugees were more likely to accumulate debt by using credit or borrowing money to access food (16% of non-registered and 13% of registered households reported this).<sup>166</sup>

While almost all (93%) of households assessed by the VASyR had an acceptable FCS, 45% were using negative coping strategies. This suggests that in Lebanon the common use of coping strategies could be helping to maintain a high FCS. It should be noted that this was not corroborated in REACH data from KRI and Jordan, where higher food consumption scores were associated with lesser need to adopt coping strategies. WFP theorizes that food security in Lebanon may be more significantly affected by the use of coping strategies than food consumption patterns due to their unendurable nature.<sup>167</sup> To effectively mitigate the use of coping strategies, a better understanding of how it affects and is affected by food consumption is required, particularly among Syrian households that receive regular food assistance and those that do not.

### Coping strategies used in Turkey

ACAPS estimated that a comparatively low proportion (15%) of Syrian refugees living in camps supported by WFP/TRC in Turkey is using coping strategies.<sup>168</sup> Among these, a majority are primarily relying on less preferred foods which, similarly to Egypt and Iraq, generally results in a lower consumption of meat.<sup>169</sup> It should be noted that this excludes host community-based households that have not been comprehensively assessed.

<sup>159</sup> WFP, Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: 2013 Report (December 2013).

<sup>160</sup> Inter-agency, Multi-sector Needs Assessment in Lebanon (April 2014).

<sup>161</sup> Handicap Int. and HelpAge International, Hidden victims of the Syrian crisis: disabled, injured and older refugees (2014).

<sup>162</sup> Inter-agency, Multi-sector Needs Assessment in Lebanon (April 2014).

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> WFP, Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: 2013 Report (December 2013).

<sup>165</sup> UNHCR, Lebanon: Winterization 2013 – 2014 Baseline Report (February 2014).

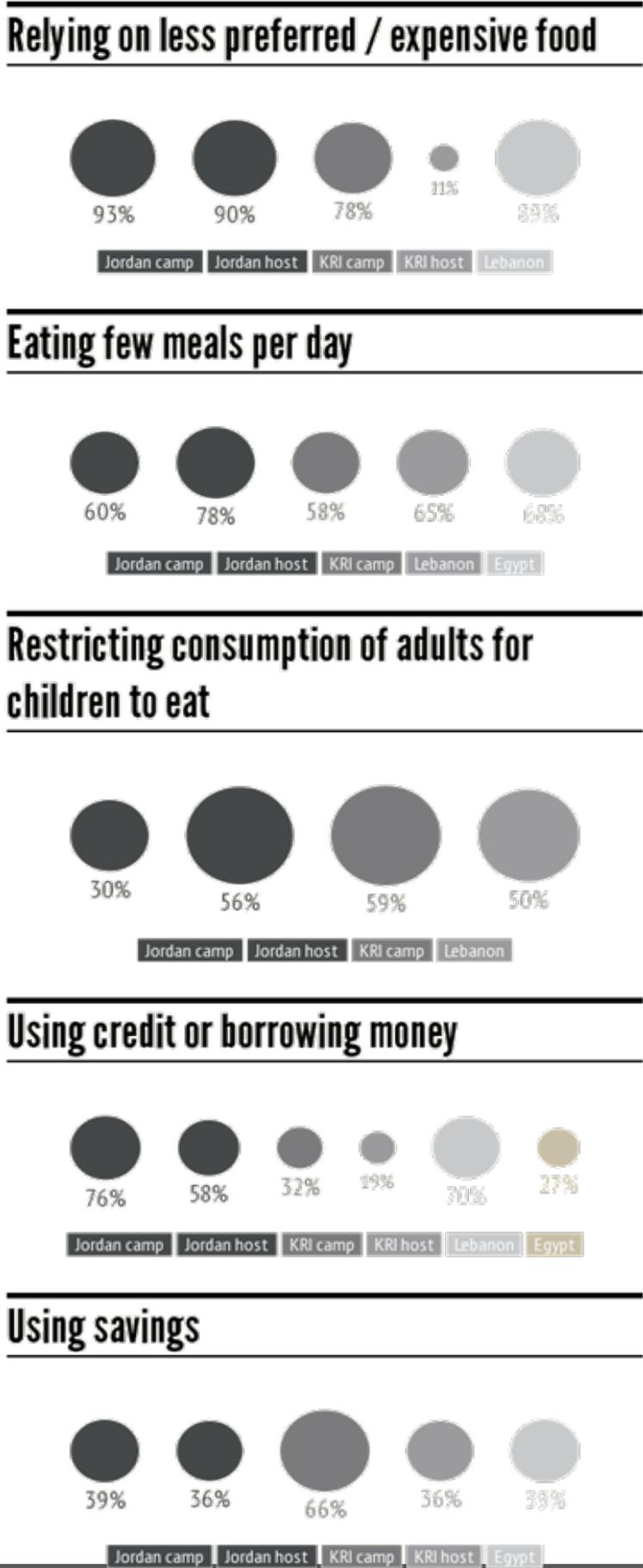
<sup>166</sup> Handicap Int. and HelpAge International, Hidden victims of the Syrian crisis: disabled, injured and older refugees (2014).

<sup>167</sup> WFP, Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: 2013 Report (December 2013).

<sup>168</sup> ACAPS, Regional Analysis Syria 07 February 2014 (February 2014).

<sup>169</sup> UNHCR, 2014 Regional Response Plan (December 2013).

Infographic 1: Regional comparison of the most commonly reported coping strategies



## CONCLUSION

**Understanding the main factors undermining access to food by Syrian households within Syria and in neighbouring countries is essential to ensure appropriate and well-targeted humanitarian intervention.** In providing comparisons of primary and secondary information related to food security across the different countries and contexts in which Syrian refugee households live, REACH aims to enable humanitarian organisations to prioritise the refugee populations most vulnerable to food insecurity in specific geographical areas and contexts.

**Syrian refugee households living in similar contexts, including formal refugee camps, informal settlements or host communities, may face similar challenges.** For instance, in the KRI camps and Al Za'atari camp in Jordan, REACH found that a majority of households identified food as the primary households need whereas refugees in Jordanian host communities are more urgently in need of housing support. Similarly, whereas access to employment is prevalent among host community refugee households in Egypt, Jordan and the KRI, camp-based households in Jordan and the KRI in particular are heavily reliant on savings as a primary economic resource.

**The inability to access sufficient food to meet basic needs means that many refugee households across the region are adopting unsustainable coping strategies** resulting in the exhaustion of savings or accumulation of debt. Without the capacity to generate income, these coping mechanisms have dangerous financial implications and increase the likelihood of greater food insecurity in the future.

This report also highlights **key information gaps to be addressed by future assessments to enable a more comprehensive understanding of the food-related needs of Syrian populations in neighbouring countries as well as within Syria.** For example, as the MSNA in Lebanon reveals, little information is known about recent arrivals in Lebanon compared to registered refugees despite the fact that the former are more likely to experience food insecurity because they do not have access to food assistance. This is also the case among host community-based households in Turkey and Iraq, although further analysis conducted for the April 2014 MSNA in the KRI should help to shed some light on these issues. REACH also found limited data regarding food security-related indicators among refugee households in Egypt and Turkey generally. There are also critical information gaps regarding the situation of Syrian IDPs in regards to food security and generally.

This regional thematic report has focused on primary and secondary data to assess comparable indicators and identify information gaps that remain. To complement this, REACH has also released a regional thematic analysis on informal settlements, similarly based on primary and secondary data,<sup>170</sup> in addition to a regional multi-sector analysis of primary data collected by REACH in the KRI, Jordan and Syria.<sup>171</sup> Where possible, REACH integrates RRP and SHARP indicators, adding need, vulnerability and outcome indicators to go beyond measurement of outputs to assess the effect of the humanitarian response on Syrian households.

With field presence and active involvement in sector and multi-sector assessments and information management in Jordan, the KRI, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, REACH is undertaking regional analysis on specific sectors and themes using data collected with various partners. The aim is to provide aid actors engaged in the response to the crisis in Syria and neighbouring countries with a regional overview and thus contribute to a deeper understanding of the impact of the crisis on Syrian populations. REACH is also engaged collecting and analysing data on the impact of the crisis on local communities hosting displaced Syrians, the world's largest refugee population.

<sup>170</sup> REACH, Displaced Syrians in Informal Settlements within Syria and in neighbouring countries - Regional Thematic Analysis report, June 2014.

<sup>171</sup> REACH, Syrian Households in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Jordan and within Syria: Regional Multi-Sector Analysis of Primary Data, May 2014.

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